

Will the Real Alexander Standish House Please Stand Up?

By TONY KELSO



The recent sale of the 10 million-dollar estate at Goose Point off of Standish Street includes a house that has long been called the Alexander Standish

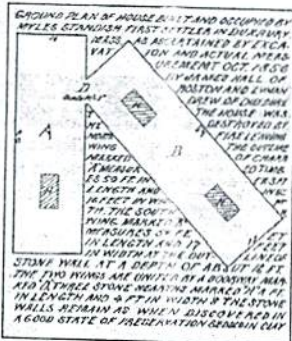
house, built in 1666.

Alexander Standish was the oldest surviving son of Myles and Barbara Standish and inherited his father's farm after Myles' death in October 1656. Alexander Standish was born about 1626 and died in July 1702 at about age 76. He was married twice, first to Sarah Alden and later to Desire Doty and had two families with both wives. He left a will dated a few days before he died that mentions a "dwelling house" that he willed to his son Myles. It is these outlines of his life that provide the

ystery of the house or houses of Alexander Standish.

Houses 1

2: The Alexander Standish cellar plot on Standish Street has long been known as the site of the Captain Myles Standish house. In addition has that about 10



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years after the death of Myles, his house went down. In 1856, in what is called the most scientific archeological survey, a dig conducted at the site confirmed a cellar hole and at some point there had been a major fire. The dig also revealed an odd outline of a building that resembled a V. Later, historians think in fact it was not one building but two, the one possibly being a house built after the first one was destroyed by fire. As this dig was the first of its kind, the survey was preliminary at best and to date no further digs have been done at that site. Alexander Standish is likely to have lived in one or both houses after the death of his father.

House 3: The construction date of 1666 has traditionally been given to what is commonly called the Alexander Standish house, because the fire was supposedly 10 years after the death of Myles in 1656. The problem with dating this house through deeds or wills is that the surrounding farm was passed down in the Standish family until great grandson Myles sold it out of the Standish family in 1761.

It was not until 1870 when the ambitious Boston lawyer Stephen Allen came to Duxbury and bought up as much of the old Standish farm as he could that the house off of Standish Street began to be identified as Alexander's house. Allen built a large summer house nearby, painted 1666 on the chimney of the old house, and used it as a selling point for his grandiose real estate plans, which called for a monument honoring Myles Standish on the top of Captain's Hill, a surrounding steamboat wharf, hotel at the crest of the hill and cottage developments at the foot. The old gambrel-roofed house was part of the selling point of this scheme and so was featured for years on many postcards and souvenir china.

In 1991, when the house was finally being sold out of the Allen-Patten family, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) took a look at the structural elements of the house. They suggested that although the house had some aspects of First Period Architecture, the first phase of buildings built by families like the Standishes, the house was more likely built between 1725-1740, which could make it built by Myles, the grandson of the first Myles and son of Alexander.

House 4: High on Captain's Hill is 68 Myles View Drive, which, in part, is a very old, small gambrel-roofed house. The deeds for the property consistently mention a house, and those deeds bring the property back to Alexander Standish in March 1702, when he and his second wife Desire sold it and 60 acres to the incoming young Duxbury minister John Robinson. Alexander died only a few months after this sale.

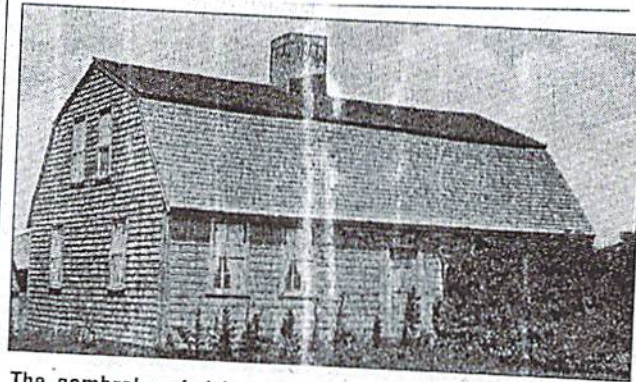
House 5: When Stephen Allen bought the former Myles Standish farm in 1870, there were three houses on the property overlooking Goose Point Pond. One was Alexander Standish House 3, one was a house moved off and is now 304 Standish Street, and one was taken down. This last house was described as a low Cape style. No photographs exist of this house, but some old Duxbury families felt at the time that it was really an old Standish house. Again the deeds are not helpful since it

was one large farm for so long a time.

So can the real Alexander Standish house really stand up? After all these centuries, the best we can say is that there are two existing Duxbury houses and two or three vanished houses that could lay claim to being his. It is a mystery we can probably never solve. But at the risk of making someone from a distant century like Alexander Standish sound too modern, the changing circumstances of his life - early marriage and family, inheriting his father's farm, a house burning, a late marriage and second family and old age - were good reasons to think about new houses and their possibilities.



Deeds show Alexander Standish and his second wife Desire sold this house in March 1702.



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